

Councillor Arthur Coote – Portfolio Holder for Housing

Report to Full Council: 10th October 2023

General Summary

Repairs and Maintenance

Firstly, in asset management, UDC have been continuing to work with UNSL to agree the capital works programme for this year and next. We are still awaiting data from them to identify if any works on the proposed plan have been accounted for in last years works in progress. UNSL have promised this data by the 13th October 2023. We have a sign off process in place for capital works that are urgent, so we do not delay services to tenants, however our overall programme has not yet commenced, which is delaying our compliance with the Decent Homes Standard.

UDC have procured damp and mould contractors to complete the mould washes on our severe and moderate cases as UNSL had not been able to procure them within the timescales that UDC requested for the mould washes and remedial works to have taken place, which was for all sever cases to have been completed by the end of September. Letters are starting to go to tenants advising them that ICE and NCC (the two contractors) will be making appointments to visit and complete works. This work is being supervised by our Safer Homes Officer.

Void turnaround times remains at an average of 55 days against a benchmark average of 20 days. We are working at a granular level with UNSL to work through the 'key to key' stages but lack of in-house resources and an inability to source contractors quickly to cover the work is the reason that voids are taking longer to complete. A positive is that the standard of void properties has improved.

Since June we have revised our gas servicing and electrical check access procedure, bringing forward stages of the process with UNSL contractors and requiring the Housing Management team to intervene at an earlier stage where there are missed appointments or no contact. We have also engaged the use of injunctions to gain access to complete the checks and any remedial works that are identified, having completed 5 with 4 more in the legal process. This approach has meant that we have been able to access properties and identify property conditions issues and vulnerability that we were not previously aware of and for the housing officers to work with residents to address any issues.

You will note that there has been media attention in relation to reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC). Whilst it's use is not widespread in social housing; we have identified 3 sheltered schemes and 600 properties that were built during the period that RAAC was used. We have completed a desktop investigation and we started visual inspections last week to identify if we have any properties that we believe will need

specialist investigation. To date, we do not but will continue our visual inspections over the next two weeks.

UDC have agreed with Norse Group Ltd and UNSL that it is necessary to re-negotiate the terms of the existing Service Level Agreement and the Share Holder Agreement that exists between all parties. Heads of Terms were issued to UNSL by UDC on the 29th October 2023, requiring information and setting out expectations around the process, with key milestones. Decisions linked to the re-negotiation will require the oversight and approval of Housing Board and Cabinet at various stages before the commencement of possible remobilisation activities.

An update on the errors made in setting rents for the past two years, a letter has been sent to all tenants affected and rebates have all been issued. CMT will be signing off a new procedure, putting in lines of defence to tighten up the governance, so that all rent changes and rents for new homes or those which are calculated when a home is re-let, are checked by senior, qualified officers before being finalised. A new Rent Setting Policy is currently in draft and an internal audit is scheduled for November for added assurance.

The Tenant Satisfaction Measure's survey will begin the week commencing 9 October, a randomly selected number of our tenants will be called by 'Acuity', the provider that we have chosen to use and who completed our test run. Results of the survey will need to be submitted to the Regulator of Social Housing. We have included details of the survey in our most recent tenant newsletter.

We have recently completed and published our Annual Housing Report. A copy has been sent to all tenants and leaseholders.

End.